



**South Louisiana Chapter
New Orleans**

Traffic Safety Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, October 18, 2006

The meeting was held in the 2nd floor Training Room in the ISH Bldg., 4713 Utica St., Metairie, LA. A complimentary lunch was served at 11:30 am. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Del Bosarge, Committee Chairman, at about 12 noon. The following were present:

Del Bosarge, Jefferson Parish Traffic Engineering, dbosarge@jeffparish.net
Gloria Calamari, New Orleans Traffic Court
Carol Champagne, Jefferson Parish Special Events, fax 736-6778
Dan Champagne, ISH, dan.champagne@ish1.com
Landry Dixon, Office of Addictive Disorders, ldx621@msn.com
Lt. Curt Franz, Causeway Police, cfranz@gnoec.org
Dorothia Halligan, Jefferson Parish Carnival/Mardi Gras, dhalligan@jeffparish.net
Beth Inbau, National Safety Council, South LA Chapter, beth@metrosafety.org
Janie Kelly, Office of Public Health-Injury Research, jdely2@dhh.la.gov
Chris Landry, Defensive Driving Instructor
Sgt. Shawn Michel, Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office, fax 465-1497
Sgt. John Pollard, St. Charles Sheriff's Office, jpollard@stcharlessheriff.org
Donald Redman, AAA, dredman@aaamissouri.com
Sgt. Anthony Rodriguez Jr., Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office
Steve Strength, LA Dept. of Transportation & Dev., stevestrength@dotd.state.la.us
Patrick Thompson, Downtown Development Dist., pthompson@neworleansdowntown.com

Mr. Redman reported that OPEC is manipulating the oil market. Although we have enjoyed a recent reduction in gasoline prices, prices are expected to begin to rise soon. Rising prices keep the US focused on finding alternative fuel sources.

Mr. Redman also reported that AAA is still writing auto insurance. However, since the price of home insurance is so high, AAA has ceased writing it in Louisiana.

Sgt. Michel reported that there were 5 fatalities in Jefferson Parish in the past 3 months. JPSO is investigating about 180 hit & runs per month. Although the Traffic Department is seriously short of personnel, they are issuing about 2,000 citations per month. When asked about the requirement for auto insurance, he stated that Title 32 only applies to Louisiana residents. Although JPSO issues tickets to out-of-towners, the Department of Motor Vehicles cannot enforce Title 32.

Sgt. Pollard reported that St. Charles Sheriff's Office is also experiencing a staffing shortage. There were 8 fatalities in May. He asked Mr. Strength with DOTD to install rumble strips along I-310.

National Safety Council, South Louisiana Chapter

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Sgt. Rodriguez reported that Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office is also short 2 officers in the Traffic Enforcement Division.

Lt. Franz reported that just after Hurricane Katrina, the Causeway Bridge was known as the "World's Longest Drag Strip," forcing the agency to take quick action. They issue about 3,000 tickets per month and had 3 fatalities since the storm. All were from drowning and 2 were alcohol-related. A vehicle carrying a bridge tender went over the side and sank. The bridge tender was able to escape. The back windshield blew out as the vehicle hit the water, causing him to be sucked out as the vehicle sank. Lt. Franz also stated that crashes are down but contractors with unsecured loads are still a problem.

Mr. Strength reported that traffic patterns in the area are back to pre-Katrina levels, except in St. Bernard and New Orleans East. DOTD has completed about 91% of all traffic signal repairs and is working on replacing signs in the area. The Motorist Assistance Program (MAP) contract covering the Twin Spans (I-10 from N.O. to Slidell) will be ending soon. Those resources will return to the High Rise (I-10 over Industrial Canal) and will be covered by a new contractor. A MAP contract to cover the I-10 from the Superdome to the west is being worked on. They are also working to include I-610 and all of downtown under a single contract. Mr. Strength also reported on other projects: Causeway @ I-10 renovation; Barataria Blvd. widening. He said the piers at I-10 @ Causeway are for a future project. He offered to bring a drawing of that project.

Mr. Strength reported that DOTD is looking for employees. They have FEMA trailers available on their facility if someone gets hired but does not have a place to stay.

Mr. Strength stated that the Safe Routes to School program is now housed in the DOTD office. Money will become available for that program.

Mr. Strength also reported that the communication tower at the old Troop B station survived Katrina but was destroyed by a tornado in February and has not been repaired, which is hindering communications. It was mentioned that the fog advisory signs on I-310 have never worked properly.

Mr. Bosarge reported that just after the storm Jefferson Parish initially had problems getting materials to replace damaged street signs. They plan to have all signs repaired by the end of the year. He reported that the West Napoleon project is completed and traffic is flowing well. He said the project to cover the canal at Severn @ Veterans should be completed before Mardi Gras. He said the Clearview project is almost completed and Carol Sue @ Oakwood is now open. He reported on the project at Stumpf @ Terry Pkwy.

Mr. Bosarge stated that the volume of traffic has increased in J.P. since Katrina even though the population is only about 94%.

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Mr. Dan Champagne reported that all refineries in the area are running at their peak. However, with new security regulations, contractors must conduct 7-year background checks. He also said that all the refineries in the U.S. are old, outdated and expensive to maintain. He said that alternative fuel sources, such as E85 Ethanol are already available, but expensive and not as efficient as gasoline. Hydrogen-powered cars are available, but there is no demand in the U.S.

Mr. Thompson reported that many of the signs in the Central Business District were damaged and some of the signals are still flashing. He said the hotels are back to about 85% of pre-Katrina numbers and occupancy is about 80% of what's available. Costs are high. The Ritz is due to open in December. The Hyatt is negotiating with the City of N.O. for renovation into a new City Hall & park, but the City does not have the money. The Fairmont is for sale and not open. The first cruise line is back and, as that industry returns, will greatly help the City.

Ms. Calamari reported that the N.O. Traffic Court is temporarily housed in the Algiers Court House on the West Bank. Municipal Court is still in a warehouse at another location, even though the sign says it includes Traffic Court. Traffic Court Divisions A & B are being held in the morning and Divisions C & D in the afternoon. They are processing about 200 DWIs & more traffic tickets with fewer staff than pre-Katrina. They have not been able to process any expungements since the storm.

Ms. Kelly reported that she is the new Injury Prevention Coordinator for the state and looks forward to working with everyone.

Mr. Dixon reported that, although the storm disrupted their activities in the schools, he hopes the new program will be more unified in its approach to health & safety (prevention). He distributed information about DWI Court Training and the location of open MHSD Centers.

Ms. Halligan reported that 2006 Mardi Gras in J.P. went well. 2007 looks good, with Monday, Tuesday & Thursday without parades. When asked about trash pickup, she stated that float riders are not allowed to bring throws in boxes, so that is not a problem. She said street sweepers follow the parade.

The group decided to meet again on **Wednesday, November 15, 2006**, 11:30 am and to pay for lunch to be catered. The meeting adjourned at about 1:10 pm.

Submitted by: Beth Inbau, NSC President & CEO

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